

Rumania the Belgium of the Balkans

Bulk of Country Already Looted by the Hun and Its Fate Depends Wholly on Victory of Allies

By KONRAD BERCOVICI.

THE muddle created by the collapse of Russia has given the Teuton monster the long coveted chance to strangle Rumania undisturbed in his work. Isolated from all her friends and allies, betrayed by Russia, the only country that could have come to her aid, Rumania must submit to whatever indignities the Central Powers heap upon her.

Rumania will bear the consequences of the blunders of the rulers of her allies, France and England, who knew very little of Balkan politics when they urged the Rumanians to enter the war. She will also be the victim of traditional Russian treachery that was, and is and will be.

Few countries were so richly supplied with natural protective barriers as was Rumania before her entrance into the war. The entire eastern border was protected by the Pruth River and the Black Sea, the northern and western by the Transylvanian Alps, the Carpathian Mountains; the southern border was shielded by the broad marshes of the Danube, which is half a mile and more in breadth and very deep. Only in the southwest for a distance of about a hundred miles was there a dangerous gap in the natural protective line: the southern border of the Dobrudja toward Bulgaria.

Ruined by Russian Treachery.

The two provinces of the kingdom of Rumania lay like open jaws between which the enemy could have been crushed as in a vise but for the treachery of Russia. Through the machinations of pro-German officials in Petrograd the supplies of ammunition destined for the armies of Rumania were sent to Vladivostok and other points distant from the battlefields, where they were out of reach and useless.

The Rumanian armies, which started so gloriously with the invasion of Transylvania and Bukovina, the Austrian province wrested without a blow from Moldavia in 1775, were driven back, routed, by the combined Teuton, Bulgar and Turkish armies. Four-fifths of the country fell under the heel of the enemy. The limbs of Rumania were amputated, her rapid advance in civilization was checked, and with the crippled torso the Teutons now debate peace.

But war is not to be a permanent condition of the world. The old wounds will heal, must heal in time, so let us see what the future holds in store for this unfortunate country.

The development of a country depends on several things, principal among which are its natural resources, the industry of the people and its immediate neighbors.

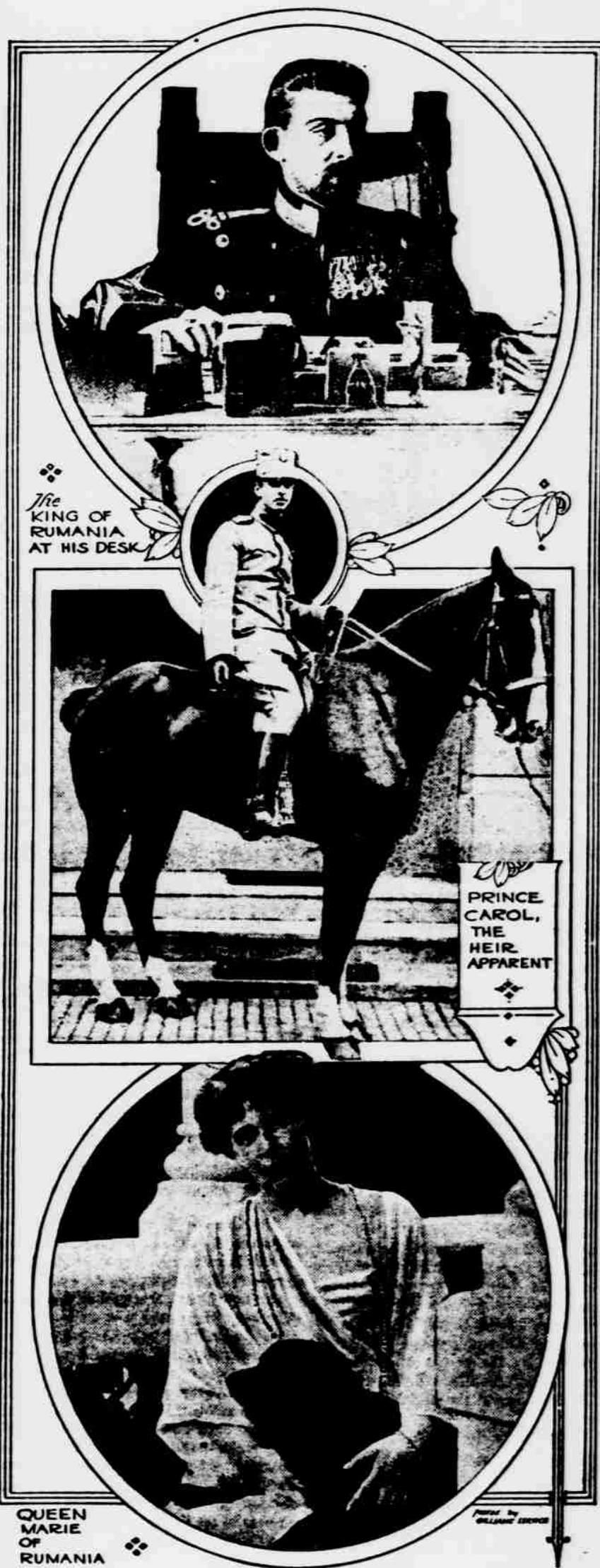
Richest of Balkan States.

The natural resources of Rumania are the richest of the Balkan peninsula. Besides its immense wheat fields, Rumania possesses great oil fields, the product of which competed with the Batum fuel output long before the Standard Oil Company of America started its exploitation. Almost the whole of the oil territory is now in the hands of the enemy and it is inconceivable that he will release what he holds unless a complete military defeat of the western front pries his fists open.

The oil fields of Rumania have been coveted a long time by the dual monarchy. Austrian and German capital made several attempts to get hold of them before the grants for their exploitation were given to the American company. Should Rumania be sacrificed at the peace table and the oil lands remain in the hands of the enemy, the onward march in civilization of the "Belgium of the Orient" will be severely checked.

The development of modern industry depends almost entirely on the cheapness and availability of fuel. Rumania had no coal mines to speak of. Coal is very expensive. It was mostly imported from England, from Cardiff.

The war has denuded the Rumanian forests. Her only salvation rests in the oil fields. Without them she is almost hopelessly crippled. In the hands of the Austrians these oil fields will only be



used to serve Austria and her friends and will be employed to forge the murderous weapons of the future.

The taking away of the oil fields in the proposed rectification of frontiers will also make a new gap in one of the natural barriers of the country, the Carpathian Mountains, and lay open the country to a military invasion from Hungary. Under such conditions foreign capital will shun Rumania as an insecure country, and even Rumanian capital will flow out of the land. We must keep in mind that Rumania's national gold reserve of \$600,000,000 was seized by the Russian revolutionary Government and will eventually find its way to Germany. The whole population of Rumania will have to labor for years and years to replenish the plundered treasury and thus give face value to the bank notes of the kingdom.

The natural border gone, the independence of the country will be at the mercy of Austria-Hungary, which has no interest in the development of any Balkan country, much less the development of Rumania.

Besides Austria-Hungary the Teutons also wanted to satisfy the demands of

their ally Bulgaria. Bulgaria had an old score to settle with Rumania. First there was the jealousy which was engendered by the sense of her own impotence. Russian influence throughout the war has kept this jealousy alive through diplomatic and undiplomatic agents. Russia had her own interests in the Balkans and she was forever working to thwart the possibility of a future coalition of all Balkan countries.

Such a coalition would have forever dispelled Russia's dream of Constantinople; therefore Russia played one nation against the other until they were each ready to jump at the other's throat. Another important point in the score Bulgaria has to settle is Rumania's invasion of Bulgaria in July, 1913, toward the end of the second Balkan war.

Now, outside of Turkey, Bulgaria is the most uncivilized country of the Balkans. Whatever territory she will wrench away from Rumania will become worthless. Whatever industrial or agricultural possibility such territory may have will be reduced to a minimum. The only thing that will grow on such land will be ignorance, the only thing the Bulgars will develop will be their own arrogance.

Oil Fields Long Coveted by Dual Monarchy and Grain Fields the Envy of Neighbors

In exchange for the fertile lands of Bessarabia Russia gave to Rumania in 1876 the waste land of the Dobrudja. Inside of thirty years Rumania developed the waste into a fertile country, and at a tremendous cost she built the port of Constantza on the Black Sea. The ports of Braila and Galatzi became the most important wheat centres of Europe. Hundreds of ships cleared weekly. The most modern lading facilities were installed by the Government and the beauty of the ports was unrivalled by any of their neighbors on the Danube. During all this time the Bulgars remained inactive.

Bulgars Can Only Destroy.

Of course the Teutons and the Bulgarians have destroyed this achievement. Should the Dobrudja remain in the hands of the latter there can be no hope of restoration. The Bulgarian can only destroy. And even if it remains in the hands of Rumania no capital will be invested for any restoration as long as there is a gap anywhere in the natural border line.

The enemies of Rumania know whatever they force upon her now while she is at their mercy will not count at all if they are defeated in the West. And with this knowledge in mind they will proceed to extract from the lands, the mines and the people every removable thing. Thus whatever territory may be returned to Rumania will have lost half of its original value.

Except for the military purposes of the invaders there was not a pair of oxen in the Wallachian province at the end of 1917. From Turnu Severin to Galatzi there were not more than a dozen privately owned horses. "To leave only the eyes to weep with," was the maxim followed more to the letter in Rumania than in Belgium. Not since the invasion of Europe by the Goths, Tatars and the Magyars under Attila, the Scourge of God, has the world witnessed such devastation.

Even Birds Have Left.

All the granaries were emptied, all the cattle taken, all important buildings destroyed, the forests cut and thousands of acres of fertile land were impoverished. Fowls are a rarity and even migratory birds have learned to avoid the denuded country. The celebrated vineyards of Dragashan and Odobesti were trampled down, the beehives of Oltenia and Dobrudja were destroyed, the people were driven into abject slavery. Kultur has passed.

Under certain conditions of a war weary world the territorial status quo ante bellum may be all that could be obtained for Rumania. She will then have to plunge into a period of reconstruction. It will take several generations ere the country will be reestablished and able to take again its former place on the road of progress. The Rumanians are a very industrious people and it is only the confidence in their industry which gives a glimmer of light to the sombre spectacle.

There hardly will be any foreign capital invested in Rumanian enterprise. Every country will need what it yet has. Most of the European capital is being blown away in the smoke of the battlefields. But the recuperative powers and the energy of the children of Trajan will offset those disadvantages.

But should the Teutons be compelled to accept the principle of self-determination of nations, Rumania will at once become the most powerful country of the Balkans.

Before the war the population of Rumania was 7,000,000, of whom more than a million were foreigners residing in the country. But there were more than a million Rumanians in Austrian Bukovina, more than two million Rumanians in Bessarabia and close to four millions in Transylvania and the neighboring districts as far as Theiss. Like one man all those estranged Rumanians will declare for their mother country.

The Rumanians living in Transylvania were always persecuted by the Magyars. They were thrown into dungeons for even

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